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RECREATION

IN SMALL WATERSHED PROJECTS

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SMALL WATERSHED PROJECTS FILL NEED FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

The demand for outdoor recreation has never been greater. From all indications it will continue to grow at a rapid pace. With more leisure time, more spendable income, and more mobility, people will seek the out of doors in increasing numbers.

Interest in outdoor recreation in the past 15 years has far outstripped population trends. Recreation visits to the national forests alone have increased 240 percent in the past 10 years. Federal and State recreation land and waters in most areas are already overcrowded. Existing public recreation grounds cannot keep pace with the growing demand.

Much of the demand in the out of doors is for water-based recreation. People enjoy swimming, fishing, canoeing, boating, water skiing, hunting, and skindiving. They also want to go picnicking, camping, hiking, sight-seeing, and just relax near the water.

There are many avenues open for developing local public water-based recreation facilities. One of the newest approaches is through small watershed projects.

The small watershed projects authorized by Public Law 566 now offer an excellent opportunity for the development of recreation facilities. The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act was amended by Congress in 1962 to allow the Federal Government to give technical and financial help and long-term loans to watershed-project sponsors in developing public recreation facilities.

Most watershed projects include one or more reservoirs designed to retard the peak runoff water from heavy rains and release it slowly over a period of time. By raising the dams these reservoirs can be enlarged to serve multiple purposes such as recreation, fish and wildlife development, agricultural water management, and municipal and industrial water supply.

The watershed act, originally passed in 1954 primarily for flood prevention, has been repeatedly broadened by Congress to meet the new challenges in resource development. Few conservation acts have created as much popular interest and activity in such a short time. By October 1, 1963, local organizations had requested help under the law's provisions in some 2,000 watersheds. A total of 920 had been approved for planning and 498 were in actual operation.

Watershed projects generally range in size from 10,000 to 250,000 acres. They average about 60,000 acres in size and include about 7 reservoirs. There are nearly 13,000 small watersheds in the United States of which some 8,300 need project action. Many of these have recreation potentials.

Under the 1962 amendment the Federal Government may pay up to 50 percent of the costs of construction, land rights, and minimum basic facilities needed for public access to and enjoyment of the recreation area.

One of the major goals of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural areas development program is to promote outdoor recreation opportunities on both privately owned and public land to better serve the needs of our growing urban population and to increase rural income. Multiple-purpose small-watershed projects can do much to fill this need. They can bring public recreation opportunities closer to many people. Land not now needed to grow crops can be put to a more desirable use. Often, public recreation areas that draw people from a considerable distance create a demand for new services and businesses that aid in boosting the local economy.

Recreation developments in watershed projects attract a few thousand to several hundred thousand visitors annually depending on the size, location, and facilities. The influx of tourists to an area often creates a profitable industry. Increased demands for food, lodging, transportation, gasoline, fishing and hunting supplies, and related sports equipment generate new jobs and more income for local people.

Watershed projects must be started, sponsored, and maintained by units of government such as soil and water conservation districts, conservancy districts, municipal and county governments, and State agencies. The Department of Agriculture provides technical and financial assistance and loans for watershed development through the Soil Conservation Service and the Farmers Home Administration.

This folder describes some of the outdoor recreation areas already developed and under development in watershed projects. More information on technical and financial assistance available from the Soil Conservation Service may be found on the back page.

OUTDOOR RECREATION CREATES NEW ENTERPRISES IN RURAL AREAS

Many watershed lakes are already bringing the excitement and pleasure of water-based recreation to areas denied these opportunities in the past.

For example an 80-acre lake in the Mountain Run Watershed in Virginia is now being used by 3,000 people who previously had to travel from the community to enjoy boating and fishing. Fifteen acres adjoining the lake have been developed as a picnic area. Building sites for cabins and homes are being sold in the area surrounding the lake. The recreation facilities were installed by the town and county of Culpeper, Va.

In West Virginia 100,000 visitors are expected annually to the new recreation area in the Big Ditch Run Watershed project. The Federal Government is sharing costs in enlarging one flood-prevention reservoir from 10 to 65 surface acres and in acquiring 105 acres adjoining the lake. The West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, sponsor of the recreation phase of the watershed project, has purchased an additional 491 acres around the lake for a park. The area will be developed for swimming, boating, camping, ice skating, and picnicking.

As many as 3,000 people a day have used the watershed lakes near Plain Dealing, La., for swimming, boating,

picnicking, and fishing. The dams backing the lakes are part of the Upper West Ford Cypress Bayou Watershed project and were designed to hold excess runoff water from flooding the land below. The city, which cosponsored the watershed project with the local soil conservation district, owns 60 acres of land surrounding the lake which has been developed for recreation purposes. Before the watershed project, school children were sent by bus 25 miles away for swimming. Now the local athletic coach conducts swimming lessons at the lakes located $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from town.

The Flat Creek watershed project in Arkansas is creating a profitable tourist industry in the area. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is developing one of the watershed reservoirs into a 700-acre lake, called Lake Charles, for recreation. Water will be diverted from this lake to the adjoining Shirley Bay fishing area and the Rainey Brake Waterfowl Refuge. This refuge provides about 30 miles of good fishing waters that will be enhanced by additional water from Lake Charles. The 2,700-acre State game and fish area and the 700-acre Lake Charles will combine to attract people seeking recreation from a 100-mile radius that includes Memphis, Little Rock, and numerous small communities.

In Georgia's Muscogee and Harris Counties a new recreation development is underway in the Bull Creek Watershed project that will bring water-based recreation closer to several hundred thousand people. A 48-acre lake is being developed for boating and fishing, and 61 acres adjoining the lake will have camping, picnicking, and related recreation facilities. Local sponsors for the recreation development are the Pine Mountain Soil Conservation District and the Muscogee County Board of Commissioners.

As many as 650 people in a single day have visited the large watershed lake in Oklahoma's Wildhorse Watershed project. The 950-acre lake was developed for fishing, boating, and picnicking by the City of Duncan. A 3,000-acre park surrounds the lake.

Hundreds of thousands of people will soon be taking advantage of the recreation development on the Mud River Watershed project in Kentucky. Here one of the 25 flood-detention reservoirs was enlarged to create a lake with a surface area of 800 acres. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, one of the sponsors of the watershed project, helped finance and will manage the lake for recreation purposes.

Although private groups such as churches, youth organizations, civic and service groups, sportsmen's clubs, and the like may not receive cost-sharing assistance, they may receive technical help from the Soil Conservation Service in planning recreation facilities in and around the small watershed lakes. Many groups have already taken advantage of water areas within watershed projects.

In Illinois' Old Tom Creek Watershed project a 15-acre lake formed by one of the flood-prevention dams and an additional 20 acres of land have been leased from the owners by the local Izaak Walton League chapter to provide a recreational area for members and their families. Boy Scouts and other such youth groups are also permitted to use the property.

In Virginia the Waynesboro Kiwanis Club purchased 235 acres of land with a 7-acre lake on it for \$8,000 and developed a camp for underprivileged children of the community. A modern kitchen, dining hall, barracks for boys and girls, administration building, and a large recreation area surrounding the lake were constructed at a cost of \$15,000. There are facilities for 120 children at several camping periods during the summer.

Members of the Mennonite Church of Illinois searched long and hard for an ideal summer campsite for church members. They found it when the Tiskilwa Watershed project was completed. The church purchased a 280-acre tract on which a dam and a 12-acre lake were located. Land formerly producing crops now in surplus has been converted to trees and grass. Funds for developing the area are being raised by leasing space for cabins for 25 years at \$50 a year.

The Boy Scouts in Kansas' Sekan Council now have a permanent camp with a 35-acre lake as the result of the Aiken Creek Watershed project. The area has been developed for camping, swimming, canoeing, nature, and plant study.

SMALL WATERSHEDS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUN AND RELAXATION



Shoreline around the watershed lake can be developed for swimming and play areas for children.



Two mea take advantage of one of the fishing platforms built along the Bayou Dupont Watershed project in Louisiana.

Youth groups such as Boy Scouts or church organizations find watershed lakes ideal for summer camps.



Teeaaagers play volleyball on land developed for recreation by local interests ia a Texas watershed project.



Watershed lakes can enhance waterfowl hunting or be used as wildlife refuges.



Camping is one of the most popular activities in most watershed-project recreation developments.

Water skiing is just one of the many water-based activities that can be developed on larger watershed lakes.



HOW IT'S DONE

Recreation opportunities are virtually unlimited on the small lakes created in watershed projects. Even the single-purpose reservoirs—those engineered solely for flood prevention—offer some recreation development possibilities.

The watershed reservoirs will have more lasting benefits, however, if planned for public recreation and for fish and wildlife development in the beginning.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture may now help local project sponsors enlarge dams to form bigger and deeper bodies of water that are better suited to a full range of water-based fun. USDA can also help local sponsors pay for land rights and build recreation facilities bordering the water.

USDA may pay up to 50 percent of the costs of enlarging a reservoir, purchasing additional land, and installing minimum basic facilities for public recreation use.

Minimum basic facilities may include boat docks and ramps, beach development, picnic tables and fireplaces, sanitary facilities, public water supply, power facilities, roads and trails, parking lots, and other similar or related facilities needed for public health, safety, access to, and use of the recreation area.

Federal cost sharing for land rights includes the land in the reservoir needed for recreation purposes and the adjacent land area set aside for recreation and for access roads.

Local sponsoring organizations must pay their share of the recreation development costs and in addition assume the responsibility for operating and maintaining the watershed structure and recreation area.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has delegated responsibility for administering the small watershed program to the Soil Conservation Service.

SCS uses the experience of and cooperates fully with city, county, State, and other Federal agencies in helping local organizations develop watershed recreation facilities.

Local sponsors may obtain a low-cost Federal loan through the Farmers Home Administration to help pay their share of the project costs.

Additional information on the watershed program may be obtained from any local SCS office.

This publication supersedes PA-500, Outdoor Recreation in Small Watershed Projects.

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